



ENVOYS: Jeb Bush (left), Colin Powell (cntr), Andrew Natsios (rt. rear) in Aceh.



RELIEF CARRIER: USS Abraham Lincoln and U.S. hospital ship Mercy off Aceh.



BUSH AND CLINTON: Ex-presidents visit tsunami survivors and raise aid funds.

Rushing to Help

The World Responds

Within hours of the tsunami, civilian and military relief missions from the U.S. and many other countries began moving food, water, tents, medicine and relief workers to assist the survivors.

The Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunami cut communications and isolated many communities, but reports of the disasters spread like wildfire around the world.

Early reports told of a few dozen dead. Then it was a few hundred, a few thousand. Days later it reached tens of thousands. More than two weeks later the reports spoke of more than 100,000 deaths—a figure that would be dwarfed by the final estimates of about 273,000 dead and missing—about a third of them people who simply vanished without a trace and are unofficially presumed to have died.

Some news articles focused on individual cases in which aid was slow in reaching some of the one million people displaced by the tsunamis. Others reported some donated clothing or food was poorly distributed or even soaked in the seas on remote beaches.

But most relief reached the needy as they set up shelters in tents or in hundreds of schools, temples, mosques, churches or with families unaffected by the disaster.

Food, clean water, medical care and other help was rushed by plane, helicopter, ship and trucks.

The survivors had been badly shaken. They had lost homes and families, and they had ongoing fears of the sea in case of another earthquake. But they were healthy and helping each other to get over their horrible experience and prepare to restart their lives.

They had clean water. They cooked on small kerosene stoves or cooking fires. They had clean, donated clothing to replace their own, lost when their homes were smashed by the waves.

Some relief groups issued dire predictions that as many people would die from disease and foul drinking water as from the tsunamis themselves. But they were proved wrong.

There was no outbreak of disease or loss of life due to epidemics. This is mainly because donor nations and aid groups quickly joined hands with disaster relief officials in the affected nations to dispatch immediate relief, organize teams to assess the need and prepare for one of the world's largest humanitarian relief operations in history.

WITHIN HOURS of the tsunami, in Washington, while the head of the U.S. government's principal overseas humanitarian agency—the U.S. Agency for International Development or USAID—was still in church, an emergency Response Management Team (RMT) was formed by his staff to coordinate aid.

USAID missions in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and India immediately released \$100,000 to each country for their Red Cross or other local humanitarian groups.

The U.S. State Department set up a core group of nations, along with Australia, Japan and India, to coordinate aid. State also prepared lists of missing American citizens to help their relatives determine their fate.

U.S. military forces received permission from the Thai government to set up Joint Task Force 536 at a Thai air base in Utapao, under Marine Lt. Gen. "Rusty" Blackman.

U.S. military officers there met with civilian relief specialists from USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. Military officers said they had helicopters and planes and ships ready to swing into operation. USAID officials said they had relief supplies, and experts who could determine needs and appropriate amounts and kinds of aid.

The military agreed to ferry the Agency's

relief supplies into Banda Aceh, which was soon clear of water, and into Colombo, Sri Lanka. U.S. military ships in Guam, Singapore and Diego Garcia took on fuel, tents, food, medicines and tools. Some put to sea anticipating orders to head for the region.

Cell phones were not working properly but still relayed text messages which informed USAID staff—many of them off duty for the Christmas holiday—of the huge earthquake and tsunamis, said Jon Lindborg, deputy mission director in Jakarta.

Although Aceh province had been off limits to most aid workers for 30 months as the government fought a separatist movement, USAID did have an assistance program there with the International Organization for Migration—an aid group. IOM was authorized to hire 80 large trucks which were loaded with food, water, electric generators and barrels of gasoline and driven from Medan 24 hours north over damaged roads to deliver the first relief to Aceh.

Additional aid from the U.S. and other

USAID RESPONDS TO A CRISIS

1. Crisis or disaster hits:

- Agency or U.S. Embassy issues a Declaration of Disaster
- USAID sends a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)

2. Needs Assessments: DART experts assess emergency requirements and begin to supply food, health care, sanitation, shelter and water. 1–30 days

3. Relief and Rehabilitation: Restoration of basic services to pre-crisis level. 60 days–2 years

4. Reconstruction: Large projects such as roads, hospitals and power. 1–5 years

5. Long-Term Development: Education, rule of law, governance, trade, economic growth, health and agriculture. 5–10 years



CUSHIONED AID: Landing relief from the USS Bonhomme Richard on Sumatra.



DISGORGING AID: Huge planes deliver relief for tsunami survivors.

governments, and from private relief groups, soon arrived in India, Thailand, the Maldives and Somalia.

TUESDAY, two days after the tsunamis struck, Indonesian Vice-President Muhammad Jusuf Kalla met with 200 ambassadors, donor agencies and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).

"They showed us staggering pictures taken when the president [Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono] flew from Papua to Banda Aceh Monday—the vice president said he'd seen enough—it looked like he had seen a ghost," said Lindborg.

Although Aceh had been off limits due to the separatist insurgency, it was thrown open to all donors to deal with the crisis. Said one foreign aid official: "In two days, Aceh went from feeling like North Korea to Woodstock" as hundreds of aid groups from around the world rushed in.

Save the Children, International Medical Corps, CARE, Doctors Without Borders, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, the International Rescue Committee and hundreds more set up operations. They ranged from huge teams of foreign and local staff equipped with fleets of trucks and even helicopters to small church-run groups with few resources.

Australia's military rushed its ships and planes to help. By Wednesday, President Bush approved U.S. military help.

BY FRIDAY, the U.S. aircraft carrier group Abraham Lincoln was off the Aceh coast. Helicopters from the Lincoln began carrying food and water to tsunami survivors on the badly hit western side of Aceh, where roads and bridges had been destroyed cutting off all land communication with the relief effort building up in Banda Aceh.

USAID officer Herbie Smith in Jakarta learned that the Lincoln could produce tens of thousands of gallons of clean water, but lacked containers to deliver it. So Smith bought up on the Jakarta market thousands

of plastic five-gallon containers and shipped them to the Lincoln.

BY THE END OF THE WEEK, the United States, Japan, Britain, Germany, Singapore, Australia, Germany, Switzerland and a dozen other countries had civilian, military and private relief teams on the ground in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. India did not request foreign help and said it would provide its own disaster response. It even sent help to its neighbor Sri Lanka. Thailand accepted foreign help for a time but it was able to care for survivors.

BY JANUARY 26, 2005, one month after the tsunamis, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies announced that the \$1.2 billion pledged worldwide was sufficient to its relief program.

BY MARCH, governments pledged more than \$6 billion in relief and reconstruction funds. Americans privately donated another

\$1 billion to relief agencies, and British citizens have contributed \$575 million.

Catholic Relief Services stopped taking donations after it received \$114 million, Doctors Without Borders started sending money back and Oxfam said it no longer needed contributions.

Jan Egeland, emergency relief coordinator for the United Nations, said 90 percent of the \$977 million the United Nations initially sought for emergency relief had been received and mostly spent providing food, shelter and medical help for survivors.

The big question mark for the future was would governments and development groups be able to come up with the estimated \$12 billion in reconstruction costs.

For the large construction projects—such as the \$200 million repair of the road and bridges on the West Coast of Aceh, the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers offered to the United Nations to audit the work pro bono.

GOVERNMENTS PLEDGE \$6 BILLION

Principal donors: see right

Other donors include: Norway, United Kingdom, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, China, United Arab Emirates, Belgium, Russia, New Zealand, Greece, Qatar, Switzerland, and India

Private contributions:
U.S. more than \$1 billion
U.K. more than \$500 million

European Commission
\$660 million

*Includes \$650 million requested from Congress

Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

